

Top 10 things to know and do before getting to Aviano (off-base residents)

Aviano AB, Italy

31st Fighter Wing

- **Passports and Visas. “No-Fee” Passport and Visa** – While military personnel may enter and remain in Italy with orders and an ID card, all dependents must obtain a “no-fee” passport and visa to enter and remain in Italy. Failure to do so puts dependents at risk for delayed entry into Italy, or deportation if they arrive in Italy without these documents! It can take months to acquire these documents so you need to begin this process as soon as possible. The passport agent at your current base Military Personnel Section will assist you, but do not delay! **Tourist Passport – You’ll need a tourist passport to travel around Europe (“no-fee” passports are not for tourist travel).** If you don’t have a tourist passport, your passport agent at the MPS can advise you on the application process, or you can apply on-line at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.
- **No On-base Family Housing.** Aviano has no on-base family housing, so the majority of the Aviano AB population lives in privately leased housing in the communities around the base. Only single Airmen live on the base (in dormitories). It takes time to find and move into a privately leased house, have the utilities turned on, and have furniture delivered. During this time, families can stay in Temporary Lodging Facilities for up to 30 days (make your reservations early). Stays in TLF beyond 30 days are on a space-available basis. PCSing personnel are allowed 30 days of Temporary Living Allowance to help offset costs during the house-hunting process, but moving into a house here will likely involve some out-of-pocket expenses so it is wise to have extra finances available to assist with move-in costs. You can learn more about Aviano housing [here](#) and by talking to your sponsor and/or key spouse. You can also contact the Housing office at DSN 314-632-2272 and check out the [Aviano Housing website](#) and the [Automated Housing Referral Network website](#). Finally, as you might expect, houses in Italy are different than houses in the U.S. When house-hunting, consider the many factors that will affect your housing choice (e.g. proximity to base, size, style, expense, etc.). Click [here](#) and [here](#) to view some Access Aviano video clips about the housing process and what to expect in a typical Italian home.
- **Driver’s Licenses. U.S. Driver’s License** – A valid U.S. driver’s license is required to obtain an Armed Forces in Italy driver’s license. It is recommended that all Airmen and family members who intend to drive in Italy obtain a valid U.S. driver’s license before arriving in Italy. If you intend to drive a motorcycle in Italy, you need to have a valid U.S. motorcycle driver’s license. You must be 18 years old to obtain any type of AFI driver’s license. **AFI Driver’s License** – During your first week at Aviano you will attend “Right Start” and be given the opportunity to obtain an AFI driver’s license. You are encouraged to take the test on-line before arriving in order to expedite the process in Right Start. [Click here](#) for study guides and the AFI test module. **International Driver’s License** – An international driver’s license may be required to drive in some European countries. If planning to drive outside Italy, it is recommended that drivers obtain an international driver’s license prior to arriving in Italy. (These can be obtained at AAA locations in the U.S., but may also be obtained in Italy.) **Insurance** – Vehicle insurance is expensive here and is currently limited to two U.S. companies in Italy. Talk to your sponsor



and/or key spouse to learn more about insurance. **NOTE: Talk to your sponsor/key spouse about driver's licenses, but also about: shipping a vehicle; buying a vehicle in Italy; how to get around before your vehicle arrives or before you buy a car (rental cars, loaner vehicles); insurance; vehicle registration; and gas coupons. Most personnel have a car in Italy, but driving in Italy is not cheap so it is important to have finances available upon arrival to cover initial vehicle expenses.**

- **Spouse Employment.** Spouse employment opportunities are limited at Aviano because Italian law prohibits Aviano personnel and dependents from working on the economy (this includes at-home businesses such as in-home child care and hair styling). There are limited appropriated employment opportunities (GS or WG positions) but non-appropriated funds jobs are more plentiful in recreation, child care, administration, food services, and sales. Because of the limited spouse employment opportunities, spouses seeking employment often accept jobs outside their desired specialty. There are also lots of volunteer opportunities around the base, so even if you can't find employment or decide not to work, you can still make a positive impact in the community. **NOTE: Spouses must be citizens of the U.S. or a NATO country to be employed on the base.** Talk to your key spouse for more information about job opportunities at Aviano.
- **Child care.** Child care for children ages 5 and under is severely limited at Aviano. While there is a Child Development Center location in both Area F and Area 1, priority goes to children of military-married-to-military and single-parent households. Since there is no on-base family housing, there are no in-home/Family Child Care daycare providers, and there are few off-base child care options on the economy. Some CDC slots are reserved for Right Start families. You can make Right Start CDC reservations 30 days in advance as can families PCSing in/out of Aviano. Contact the CDC manager at DSN 314-632-5199 or -8246 for more information about all CDC programs. Other programs are available for school age kids. Your key spouse will be able to inform you about the various child care options at Aviano.
- **Healthcare.** Aviano has a world-class medical treatment facility with many of the typical capabilities found in U.S. hospitals, to include three labor and delivery rooms. However, some specialties and services are not available on base and will require referral to local Italian providers, to include all emergency care which is only available at local off-base hospitals. It is critical that families with special needs and/or those enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program carefully coordinate through their local military medical facility to ensure adequate care is available at Aviano. Click [here](#) for more info about the 31st Medical Group. You can also contact the 31st MDG Patient Advocate at DSN 314-632-5035 for further information.
- **Pets.** Many Aviano AB families bring pets. However, shipping pets to Italy requires preparation months in advance, and can cost money out-of-pocket, so advance planning is important. All pet shipping expenses are paid by the member (not the government). There are some pet slots available on the weekly Patriot Express charter flight from Baltimore to Aviano, but they are filled quickly so talk to your TMO representative about securing reservations as soon as possible. Some weight/size restrictions apply. If you are flying **commercial, ensure you understand all of the airline's fees and restrictions. Shipping a pet on a commercial airline is generally more expensive than the Patriot Express and is often subject to more restrictions (excluded travel dates due to heat/cold, etc.)** Click [here](#) for information about pet shipping but **DO NOT DELAY** in preparing to bring your four-legged family member with you! **Also, Aviano has 24 "Pet-Friendly" Temporary Lodging rooms so make your reservations with Lodging as soon as possible. Finally, you'll need to register your pet with the base veterinarian within 30 days of arrival. If you have pet questions, talk to your sponsor, key spouse, and/or the Aviano AB Veterinarian Office (DSN 314-632-8485).**
- **Education and Schools.** Aviano AB has K-12 education available on base at the Aviano Elementary School and Aviano Middle/High School offered through the Department of Defense Education Activity. Approximately 1,175 children are registered in the Aviano schools. Click [here](#) to go to the Aviano Elementary School website, or contact the elementary school at DSN 314-632-5677. Click [here](#) to go to the Aviano Middle/High School website, or call the middle school at DSN 314-632-5777 or high school at DSN 314-632-5877 for information about registration, curriculum, etc. There are also families that home school their children at Aviano. Additionally, there are multiple universities that offer classes on base. You can contact the base Education Office at DSN 314-632-5330 **if you have questions. Also, don't hesitate to talk to your sponsor/key spouse about all education issues at Aviano.**

- **Internet and Mobile Phones.** A variety of internet and mobile phone options exist in Italy. Several free Wi-Fi spots are located around Aviano and all Lodging rooms have free Wi-Fi. Internet availability in privately leased housing depends on the community, so you should inquire about that when house-hunting. Just like in the U.S., almost everyone at Aviano has a mobile phone. A variety of options are available through several mobile phone providers, to include annual contracts and pay-as-you-go plans. Many smart phones will work in Italy, but will normally require an Italian phone company SIM chip, and possibly some setting changes. Lots of information is available on the internet, so do some research, but make sure you talk to your sponsor/key spouse to get the latest information.

- **What to Expect When You Arrive.**

Arrival – When you arrive in Italy, your sponsor will meet you at the Passenger Terminal on Aviano AB if you arrive on the Patriot Express charter flight or at Marco Polo Airport in Venice if you arrive on a commercial airline. (NOTE: In the unlikely situation that no one meets you upon arrival, call the Aviano AB Command Post at 0434-30-3100 (keep this commercial number handy for your entire tour) or DSN 314-632-3100 and ask to be connected to your unit's first sergeant. They'll take you and your family to Lodging or an off-base hotel, depending on your reservations, and lay out the schedule for the next two weeks for you.

Right Start – The Monday following your arrival, you will start a week-long program called “**Right Start.**” (Click [here](#) for the Right Start schedule.) Your spouse is invited to attend Right Start also (for those with kids, Right Start CDC slots are available and you can make your reservations 30 days in advance). **The first day of Right Start focuses on “must-have” issues, to include personnel/MPS, Pass and Registration, Passports, Finance, Housing and Legal.** There is also a special time slot just for the spouses to meet with established Aviano spouses to address spouse-specific questions and help your **family start getting settled at your new base. The second day's focus is on getting your AFI driver's license and other important in-processing actions.** The third and fourth days have very few scheduled events and are intended to give you time to start house-hunting. Your sponsor or someone else from your squadron should be available to help you house-hunt by assisting with transportation until you get your AFI license and access to a vehicle. You might also use part of these two days to begin in-processing your squadron. The last day of Right Start, Friday, is the most fun – “**Benvenuti**” (Italian for “welcome”). **Benvenuti is a one-day program where your Right Start class begins learning about life in Italy by experiencing the culture and customs firsthand. It even includes lunch at an Italian restaurant and learning to take the train. This day is optional, but you don't want to miss it!**

The Second Week – The second week has no official duties except on Thursday when the military member has several hours of briefings in the afternoon. Please note that the 31st Fighter Wing commander has given direction to all commanders at Aviano that inbounds will not report for normal duties for at least two weeks after arriving to allow newcomers to attend the entire weeklong Right Start program and begin house-hunting. Squadron commanders can deviate from this policy in extreme circumstances, but you will need time to get settled so you should expect at least two full weeks before reporting for regular duties.

The Third Week and Beyond – Since it normally takes a month or more to get into your house, and then another 30 days or so to get your vehicle, household goods, and other necessities, you should expect **that it may take two full months before you start feeling like you are settled in your new home. That's OK ... don't worry ... thousands of people have done it before you so it can be done. Just expect up front that you'll have frustrating days. It's not easy to move your family from the states to a foreign country, but after you are settled the experience is fantastic.** (Remember, you are only an hour away from Venice!)

Your Sponsor's Role – Your sponsor may not be able to personally walk you through every step of this process, but they should be routinely helping you the first two weeks until you get your AFI license, have access to a vehicle, and start house-hunting on your own. The amount of time they devote to sponsor duties will depend on how much help you feel you need, and their work duties, so make sure **your sponsor (and your supervisor) know what you need. If they don't know about it, they won't be**

able to help you. We've been increasing the focus on our sponsorship program, so your sponsor should be there for you from first contact months before arrival until you feel "settled" at about the two-month point.

Your Role – The most important thing you can do to prepare for your PCS is to keep a positive attitude.

After reading the list above, it's probably apparent that PCSing to Aviano is tougher than most other bases, but it is not that difficult to do with preparation and a good attitude. You have lots of people and resources at Aviano that will help you during your PCS, but only you can ensure a successful, smooth move. Get smart on the requirements, handle the big things early (no-fee passports/visas, pet travel, etc.), start communicating with your sponsor/key spouse early/often, sign up for free [on-line language courses](#), and start making your list of places you want to tour in Europe! It's up to you, so begin preparing now for your move.

You're going to love your assignment to Aviano! See you soon ... ciao!